

EP 0 835 088 B1



(19)

Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets



(11)

EP 0 835 088 B1

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT SPECIFICATION

(45) Date of publication and mention
of the grant of the patent:

02.02.2000 Bulletin 2000/05

(51) Int Cl.7: **A61F 13/15**

(21) Application number: **96922315.5**

(86) International application number:
PCT/SE96/00778

(22) Date of filing: **14.06.1996**

(87) International publication number:
WO 97/01995 (23.01.1997 Gazette 1997/05)

(54) AN ABSORBENT ARTICLE, SUCH AS A DIAPER, AN INCONTINENCE GUARD, A SANITARY NAPKIN OR LIKE ARTICLE

EIN ABSORBIERENDER ARTIKEL, WIE EINE WINDEL, EIN INKONTINENZSCHUTZ, EINE DAMENBINDE ODER ÄHNLICHES

ARTICLE ABSORBANT TEL QU'UNE COUCHE, UNE PROTECTION POUR INCONTINENCE, UNE SERVIETTE HYGIENIQUE OU UN ARTICLE SIMILAIRE

(84) Designated Contracting States:
DE ES FR IT NL SE

(72) Inventor: **CARLSSON, Anders**
S-435 37 Mölnlycke (SE)

(30) Priority: **30.06.1995 SE 9502390**

(74) Representative: **Kierkegaard, Lars-Olov**
Albihns Patentbyra Stockholm AB,
Box 5581
114 85 Stockholm (SE)

(43) Date of publication of application:
15.04.1998 Bulletin 1998/16

(56) References cited:
US-A- 4 560 372

(73) Proprietor: **SCA Hygiene Products AB**
405 03 Göteborg (SE)

Note: Within nine months from the publication of the mention of the grant of the European patent, any person may give notice to the European Patent Office of opposition to the European patent granted. Notice of opposition shall be filed in a written reasoned statement. It shall not be deemed to have been filed until the opposition fee has been paid. (Art. 99(1) European Patent Convention).

Description**BACKGROUND**

[0001] An absorbent article such as a diaper, a sanitary napkin or an incontinence guard will normally include a liquid-permeable outer sheet, a liquid-impermeous barrier sheet and an absorbent body located therebetween. An absorbent article of one of the aforesaid kinds has a generally rectangular shape, including two long sides and two short sides.

[0002] The outer sheet is that part of the absorbent body which lies proximal to the wearer's body in use, while the barrier layer is that part of the absorbent article which lies distal from the wearer's body. The outer sheet is normally comprised of perforated plastic film, nonwoven or a plastic and nonwoven laminate. The plastic may be a thermoplastic material, such as polyethylene. The nonwoven material may be comprised of natural fibres, such as cellulose or cotton fibres, or synthetic fibres, such as polyethylene, polypropylene, polyurethane, nylon or regenerated cellulose fibres.

[0003] The purpose of the outer sheet of an absorbent article of the aforesaid kind is to conduct fluid into the article, and to prevent rewetting of the wearer's skin and therewith create a dry surface in contact with the skin. A dry surface on that part of the article which lies against the wearer's skin in use is important to the comfort of the wearer and also in avoiding skin irritation.

[0004] The barrier layer is produced in a liquid-impermeable material and functions to prevent liquid leaking from the underside of the absorbent article. The barrier layer may be comprised of any type of material that will fulfil the criterion of liquid impermeability and which is sufficiently flexible for the purpose intended. Examples of suitable barrier layer materials are plastic films, nonwoven and laminates thereof. The plastic film may be comprised, for instance, of polyethylene, polypropylene or polyester.

[0005] The absorbent body is normally produced from cellulose pulp. The pulp may exist in rolls, bales or sheets that have been dry-defibrated and transformed in a fluffed state to a pulp mat. As before mentioned, the absorbent body may be comprised of cellulose fibres. Examples of other fibres conceivable in this regard are cotton fibres and synthetic fibres. It is also known to use in the absorbent body a foamed material.

[0006] So-called superabsorbents are sometimes used with the intention of enhancing the liquid-retaining capacity of the absorbent body, superabsorbents being polymers that are capable of absorbing several times their own weight of water or body fluid. Examples of such superabsorbents are polyacrylates, starch or modified cellulose, such as carboxymethyl cellulose.

[0007] The superabsorbent is normally added to the absorbent material in powder form, and is either admixed uniformly or is concentrated to certain parts of the absorbent body. The superabsorbent can also be sup-

plied to the absorbent body in the form of a band or a film. The advantage with this method of administration is that the superabsorbent can be easily applied in the intended manner and in the correct amount. Application of the superabsorbent in the form of a film or band also avoids the potentially harmful dust that is generated when handling all types of powder material.

[0008] The drawback with superabsorbent in film or band form, is that this method of administration can easily result in so-called gel-blocking. Gel-blocking occurs because of the rapid swelling of the superabsorbent when liquid is applied, therewith preventing further spreading of liquid down through the absorbent body. Naturally, this can also occur when the superabsorbent is applied in powder form, although the risk of gel-blocking is naturally greater when the superabsorbent has been concentrated to a smaller area of the absorbent body, as is the case when applying superabsorbent in a film or band form.

OBJECT OF THE INVENTION

[0009] The object of the present invention is to alleviate the aforesaid problems associated with application, dust generation and gel-blocking in conjunction with the use of superabsorbents in absorbent articles.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

[0010] The aforesaid problems associated with superabsorbent administration are solved by means of the present invention by applying the superabsorbent in the form of a film or a band that has been provided with slots and stretched transversely to the direction of the slots.

[0011] This results in a superabsorbent band or film having a three-dimensional structure and including holes.

[0012] It is known to produce superabsorbent material in a film form for use in absorbent articles, such as incontinence guards. U.S. 4,643,726 describes an insert for use as an incontinence guard, which is intended to be worn in conventional underclothes. The insert includes an inner liquid-permeable nonwoven sheet, an outer sheet of liquid-impermeable polyethylene film, a single absorbent layer of fluffed cellulose placed therebetween, and a layer of superabsorbent polymer located between the inner sheet and the absorbent layer. The layer of superabsorbent polymer is perforated, to facilitate passage of liquid down through the layer.

[0013] US 4,560,372 discloses a disposable absorbent product such as a diaper, sanitary napkin or wound dressing. This product includes an absorbent body and a superabsorbent material in band or film form applied in said body or in close proximity thereof; which band or film is slotted and stretched transversely to the longitudinal direction of the slots so that these form wider openings with parts of band material located between the openings.

[0014] Although these slot openings, or the perfora-

tions described in US 4,643,726, prevent gel-blocking to some extent, at least on the first wetting occasion, the openings will gradually decrease in size as the layer is wetted, due to swelling of the superabsorbent material. The liquid influx time will therefore decrease markedly with repeated wetting of the layer.

[0014] According to the present invention, the slotted superabsorbent band or film may include a large number of through-penetrating slots or slits. As the band or the film is stretched transversely to the longitudinal direction of the slots, the slots will open by virtue of the material on opposite sides of respective slots being twisted out of the plane of the film or band to form surfaces which are raised or sunken respectively from the plane of the layer. The slots are preferably straight, although they may also have some other suitable form which will allow the layer parts adjacent the slots to be twisted out of the plane of the layer and therewith form upraised edges when the film or the band is stretched. When the slots are mutually displaced in the aforedescribed manner, the edges of the slots will be lifted as the band or the film is stretched transversely to the longitudinal direction of the slots, such that the material will transform from a two-dimensional structure to a three-dimensional network structure in which the widened slots form rhomboidal openings.

[0015] Because the edges of the openings will be located in different planes, a large open area is obtained, and the openings will not swell together as the surface is wetted to the same extent as if the edges of the openings were located in one and the same plane. The openings thus maintain a wide open area even after wetting the layer, thereby preventing gel-blocking and achieving a high liquid influx rate, even after repeated wetting of the layer.

[0016] In one conceivable method of producing an absorbent article that includes an absorbent body made of fluff pulp in accordance with the present invention, there is first formed a pulp mat core. The slotted and stretched superabsorbent film is then placed on the pulp core and a second mat core is formed on top of and through the superabsorbent film. There is obtained in this way a product which is permeable to extremes beyond the superabsorbent film or band. Thus, when forming the mats, the pulp fibres will place themselves in the openings formed in the slotted and stretched superabsorbent film. This assists the transportation of liquid beyond the superabsorbent film and also in spreading of liquid to different parts thereof.

[0017] In another conceivable method of manufacturing an absorbent article in accordance with the invention, the band or film of superabsorbent material is placed directly adjacent the absorbent body on that side thereof which is intended to lie against the wearer in use. An outer sheet is then placed on top of the superabsorbent film.

[0018] In another conceivable method of manufacturing an absorbent article in accordance with the present

invention, the band or the film of superabsorbent material is placed directly adjacent the absorbent body on that side thereof which is intended to face towards the barrier layer.

5 [0019] The invention is not limited to absorbent articles which include an absorbent body comprised of mat-formed cellulose, but can also be applied with other types of absorbent bodies, such as absorbent bodies made from foamed material or cellulose material from 10 pre-formed webs.

[0020] The invention will now be described in more detail with reference to exemplifying embodiments thereof and also with reference to the accompanying drawings. The invention is not limited to the described 15 and illustrated exemplifying embodiments nor to the drawings themselves, which are merely intended to explain and illustrate the invention.

[0021] Figure 1 is a cross-sectional view of a band of superabsorbent material which includes slots.

20 [0022] Figure 2 is a sectional view in larger scale of the extended or stretched slotted material.

[0023] Figure 3 is a view of the extended or stretched slotted material from above.

25 [0024] Figure 1 illustrates an absorbent body constructed in accordance with the invention. The body may be produced by mat-forming a first pulp core 1 or pulp layer. The previously slotted and extended superabsorbent band 2 is placed on top of the first pulp core 1, whereafter a second pulp core 3 or pulp layer is formed.

30 [0025] on top of the band 2. When using a superabsorbent band constructed in accordance with the invention, there is obtained when mat-forming the second pulp core an absorbent body whose pulp fibres will extend through the holes formed in the superabsorbent band 2, 35 as the band is stretched and the slots consequently opened. This results in a product which is highly permeable to liquid through the superabsorbent band 2.

[0026] The slotted band or film 2 of superabsorbent material is applied in the absorbent product in a 40 stretched state, more specifically while stretched in a direction transversely to the longitudinal direction of the slots. The material 4 located on both sides of each slot is therewith twisted or rotated out of the plane of the film or band to form edges 5 which project upwardly and 45 downwardly from said plane. The thus widened slots form rhomboidal openings 6 whose size will depend on the extent to which the band or film is stretched. Preferably, the openings 6 will lie in a row opposite the spaces between the openings in adjacent rows.

50 [0027] The distance between the slots in the longitudinal direction will preferably be smaller than 1.5 times the length of a slot, suitably less than or equal to the slot length, preferably smaller than the slot length.

[0028] The distance between mutually adjacent rows 55 of slots will preferably be smaller than 1.5 times the slot length, suitably smaller than or equal to the slot length, preferably smaller than the slot length.

[0029] The slot film or band 2 may either be applied

so as to cover the whole of the absorbent core, or so as to cover only parts thereof. For instance, the film or band 2 may be applied so as to cover only the anticipated wetting region of the absorbent article and regions that border on said wetting region. It is also conceivable to provide the film or the band with one or more larger openings in the vicinity of the anticipated wetting region, so as to thereby enhance the liquid-permeability of this region of the article. It is also conceivable to vary the lengths of the slots in different regions, such that the slots will have a greater length, therewith providing larger openings, for instance in those regions where the heaviest influx of liquid can be expected to occur.

[0029] Figure 3 shows a diaper which includes a slotted film of superabsorbent material. The diaper is seen from that side which is intended to face towards the wearer in use, having a part 7 which is intended to lie against the wearer's stomach and a part 8 which is intended to lie against the wearer's back. The slotted film 2 would not normally be visible, although Figure 2 shows a section of the diaper in which the outer sheet and possible overlying absorbent body have been lifted away to enable the slotted film 2 to be seen from above.

Claims

1. An absorbent article, such as a diaper, an incontinence guard or a sanitary napkin, which includes an absorbent body (13) and a superabsorbent material (2) in band or film form applied in said body or in the close proximity thereof; which band (2) or film is slotted and stretched transversely to the longitudinal direction of the slots so that these form wider openings (6) with parts (4) of band (2) material located between the openings, characterized in that the parts of band material (4) located between the openings (6) are twisted or rotated to form respectively upwardly and downwardly projecting edges (5) as seen in relation to an imaginary plane of the band (2) or film in a non-stretched state.
2. An absorbent article according to Claim 1, characterized in that the slots are disposed in longitudinally extending rows which are generally parallel to the longitudinal axis of the article.
3. An absorbent article according to Claim 1, characterized in that the slots are disposed in longitudinally extending rows which are generally transversal to the longitudinal axis of the article
4. An absorbent article according to one or more of the preceding Claims, characterized in that the openings (6) of one row lie opposite the spaces between the openings (6) of adjacent rows.
5. An absorbent article according to one or more of the

preceding Claims, characterized in that the distance between the ends of two mutually sequential slots is smaller than 1.5 times the slot length.

- 5 6. An absorbent article according to one or more of the preceding Claims, characterized in that the distance between the rows is smaller than 1.5 times the slot length.
- 10 7. An absorbent article according to one or more of the preceding Claims, characterized in that the superabsorbent band (2) or film is disposed in only a part of the length and/or width of the absorbent body (1, 3).
- 15 8. An absorbent article according to one or more of the preceding Claims, characterized in that the band (2) or film includes one or more larger openings in a region opposite an anticipated wetting region of
- 20 9. An absorbent article according to one or more of the preceding Claims, characterized in that the lengths of the slots, and therewith the sizes of the openings (6), vary in different regions of the band (2) or film.
- 25 10. A method of manufacturing an absorbent structure for use in an absorbent article, such as a diaper, an incontinence guard or a sanitary napkin, including arranging a plurality of through slits in a band (2) or a film of superabsorbent material, whereafter the band or film is subjected to stretching transversely to the longitudinal direction of the slits, whereby the slits are widened to form openings (6), characterized by twisting or rotating the parts of the material (4) on both sides of the respective slits out of the plane of the band (2) or the film to form edges (5) projecting respectively upwardly and downwardly from said plane, whence the band or the film is made to change from a two-dimensional structure to a three-dimensional network structure, whereafter the slit and stretched band (2) or film is brought together with an absorbent body (1,3) made of matter-formed cellulose, foamed material or cellulose material from a pre-formed web.

Patentansprüche

- 50 1. Absorbierender Artikel, wie beispielsweise eine Windel, ein Inkontinenzschutz oder eine Hygienebinde, der einen absorbierenden Körper (1, 3) und ein superabsorbierendes Material (2) in Band- oder Schichtform enthält, das in dem Körper oder in dessen näherer Umgebung vorhanden ist, wobei das Band (2) oder die Schicht geschlitzt und quer zur Längsrichtung dieser Schlitze gedehnt ist, so daß diese offeneren Öffnungen (6) bilden, wobei zwi-

- schen den Öffnungen Bereiche (4) des Bandmaterials (2) vorhanden sind, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß** die zwischen den Öffnungen (6) liegenden Bereiche des Bandmaterials (4) verwunden oder verdreht sind, um so in Bezug zu einer imaginären Ebene des Bandes (2) oder der Schicht in nicht gedehntem Zustand auf- bzw. abwärts vorstehende Ränder (5) zu formen.
2. Absorbierender Artikel nach Anspruch 1, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß** die Schlitzte in sich längs erstreckenden Reihen angeordnet sind, die im wesentlichen parallel zur Längsachse des Artikels verlaufen.
3. Absorbierender Artikel nach Anspruch 1, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß** die Schlitzte in sich längs erstreckenden Reihen angeordnet sind, die im wesentlichen quer zur Längsachse des Artikels verlaufen.
4. Absorbierender Artikel nach einem oder mehreren der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß** die Öffnungen (6) einer Reihe gegenüber den Zwischenräumen zwischen den Öffnungen (6) benachbarter Reihen liegen.
5. Absorbierender Artikel nach einem oder mehreren der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß** der Abstand zwischen den Enden zweier aufeinanderfolgender Schlitzte kleiner ist als das 1,5-fache der Schlitzlänge.
6. Absorbierender Artikel nach einem oder mehreren der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß** der Abstand zwischen den Reihen kleiner ist als das 1,5-fache der Schlitzlänge.
7. Absorbierender Artikel nach einem oder mehreren der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß** das superabsorbierende Band (2) oder die Schicht nur in einem Längen- und/oder Breitenteilbereich des absorbierenden Körpers (1, 3) angeordnet ist.
8. Absorbierender Artikel nach einem oder mehreren der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß** das Band (2) oder die Schicht eine oder mehrere Öffnungen in einem Bereich enthält, der einem vorgesehenen Näsungsbereich des Artikels gegenüberliegt.
9. Absorbierender Artikel nach einem oder mehreren der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß** die Schlitzlängen und damit die Öffnungsrößen (6) in verschiedenen Bereichen des Bandes (2) oder der Schicht variieren.
10. Verfahren zur Herstellung einer absorbierenden Struktur zur Verwendung in einem absorbierenden Artikel, wie beispielsweise eine Windel, ein Inkontinenzschutz oder eine Hygienebinde, enthaltend Anordnen mehrerer Durchgangsschlitzte in einem Band (2) oder einer Schicht aus superabsorbierendem Material, wonach das Band oder die Schicht quer zur Längsrichtung der Schlitzte einer Dehnung unterworfen wird, wodurch die Schlitzte erweitert werden, so daß Öffnungen (6) gebildet werden, **gekennzeichnet durch** Verwinden oder Verdrehen der Materialbereiche (4) auf beiden Seiten der jeweiligen Schlitzte aus der Ebene des Bandes (2) oder der Schicht, um so von der Ebene auf- bzw. abwärts vorstehende Ränder (5) zu bilden, wodurch das Band oder die Schicht von einer zweidimensionalen Netzstruktur in eine dreidimensionale Netzstruktur verwandelt wird, wonach das geschlitzte und gedehnte Band (2) oder die Schicht mit einem absorbierenden Körper (1, 3) zusammengebracht wird, der aus mattengeformtem, geschäumtem Zellulosematerial oder einem Zellulosematerial aus einer vorgeformten Bahn hergestellt ist.

Revendications

- Article absorbant, tel qu'une couche-culotte, une protection pour incontinent ou une serviette hygiénique, qui comprend un corps absorbant (1,3) et un matériau superabsorbant (2) sous forme d'une bande ou film appliqué audit corps ou disposé à proximité immédiate de ce dernier, cette bande ou film (2) étant fendu et étiré transversalement à la direction longitudinale des fentes de sorte que celles-ci forment des ouvertures plus larges (6), des parties (4) du matériau (2) en bande se trouvant entre les ouvertures, caractérisé en ce que les parties (4) de matériau en bande qui se trouvent entre les ouvertures (6) ont subi une torsion ou une rotation de manière à former des arêtes (5) qui font saillie respectivement vers le haut et vers le bas par rapport à un plan imaginaire de la bande ou film (2) dans un état non étiré.
- Article absorbant selon la revendication 1, caractérisé en ce que les fentes sont disposées en rangées qui s'étendent longitudinalement et qui sont, d'une façon générale, parallèles à l'axe longitudinal de l'article.
- Article absorbant selon la revendication 1, caractérisé en ce que les fentes sont disposées en rangées qui s'étendent longitudinalement et qui sont, d'une façon générale, transversales à l'axe longitudinal de l'article.
- Article absorbant selon une ou plusieurs des revendications 1 à 3.

dications précédentes, caractérisé en ce que les ouvertures (6) d'une rangée se trouve en face des espaces compris entre les ouvertures (6) des rangées adjacentes.

5

- 5. Article absorbant selon une ou plusieurs des revendications précédentes, caractérisé en ce que la distance entre le extrémités de deux fentes mutuellement successives est plus petite que 1,5 fois la longueur des fentes. 10
- 6. Article absorbant selon une ou plusieurs des revendications précédentes, caractérisé en ce que la distance entre les rangées est plus petite que 1,5 fois la longueur des fentes. 15
- 7. Article absorbant selon une ou plusieurs revendications précédentes, caractérisé en ce que la bande ou film superabsorbant (2) n'est disposé que sur une partie seulement de la longueur et/ou de la largeur du corps absorbant (1,3). 20
- 8. Article absorbant selon une ou plusieurs des revendications précédentes, caractérisé en ce que la bande ou film (2) comprend une ou plusieurs ouvertures plus larges dans une région qui se trouve en face d'une région de mouillure anticipée de l'article. 25
- 9. Article absorbant selon une ou plusieurs des revendications précédentes, caractérisé en ce que les longueurs des fentes, et avec celles-ci les dimensions des ouvertures (6), varient dans différentes régions de la bande ou film (2). 30
- 10. Procédé de fabrication d'une structure absorbante destinée à être utilisée dans un article absorbant, tel qu'une couche-culotte, une protection pour incontinents ou une serviette hygiénique, comprenant la formation d'une pluralité de fentes traversantes dans une bande ou un film (2) de matériau superabsorbant puis l'étirage de la bande ou du film transversalement à la direction longitudinale des fentes, grâce à quoi les fentes se trouvent élargies de manière à former des ouvertures (6), caractérisé par le fait que les parties du matériau (4), qui sont situées sur les deux côtés des fentes respectives, sont soumises à une torsion ou une rotation les faisant dépasser du plan de la bande ou du film (2), afin de former des arêtes (5) qui font saillie respectivement dudit plan vers le haut et vers le bas , d'où il résulte que la bande ou le film est amené à passer d'une structure bidimensionnelle à une structure de réseau tridimensionnelle, après quoi la bande ou film (2) fenu et étiré est assemblé avec un corps absorbant (1,3) formé d'un mat de cellulose, d'un matériau expansé ou d'un matériau à base de cellulose provenant d'une nappe préformée. 35 40 45 50 55

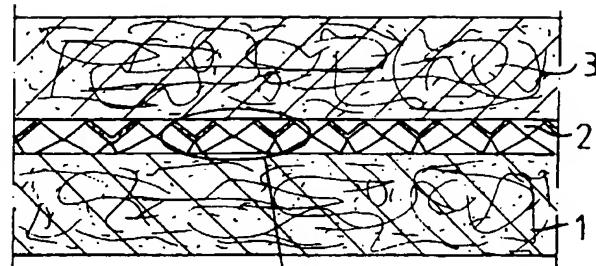


FIG. 1

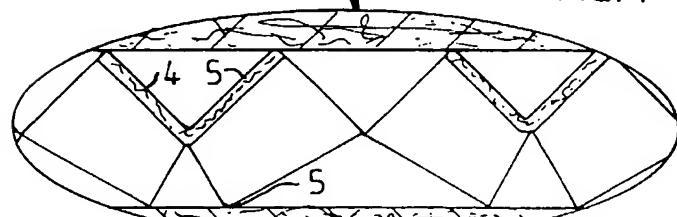


FIG. 2

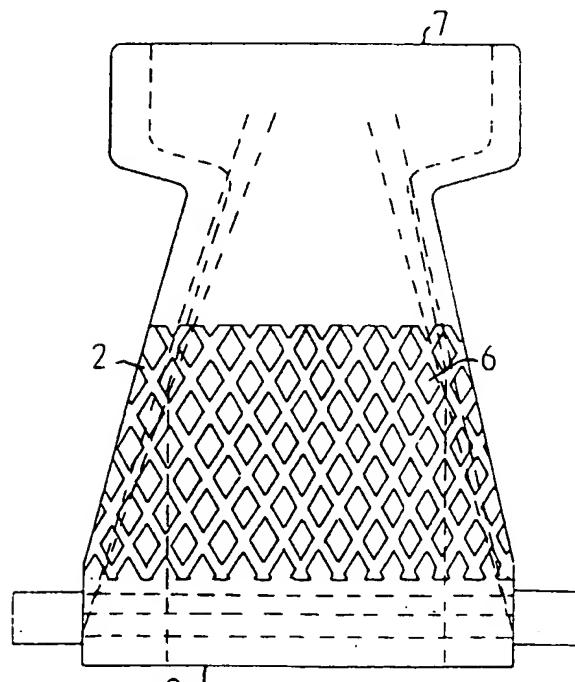


FIG. 3

THIS PAGE BLANK (USPTO)